



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

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BREDESEN PROCLAIMS APRIL 7-13 TENNESSEE STATE NATURAL AREAS WEEK SPECIAL ACTIVITIES ACROSS TENNESSEE CELEBRATE THE STATE NATURAL AREAS PRESERVATION ACT

Nashville, Tenn. - Governor Phil Bredesen has proclaimed April 7-13 Tennessee State Natural Areas Week, and Tennesseans are encouraged to join in a weeklong celebration with activities like wildflower hikes and guided tours.

"This week calls us to not only recognize and appreciate the natural beauty of Tennessee, but it reminds us how important it is to protect the quality of our air and water," Bredesen said. "By preserving and protecting these special places, I hope people 100 years from now will enjoy them as much as we do today."

The State Natural Areas Program provides long-term protection for rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal life. The program also protects ecologically sensitive areas, areas of geological and archaeological interest, and areas of great scenic beauty. First established in 1971 by the Tennessee Natural Areas Preservation Act, there are now 77 state natural areas covering approximately 110,000-acres.

"Much like 37 years ago when the public realized the importance of protecting special places and generated significant support for the Natural Areas Preservation Act, people today are interested in understanding and conserving unique landscapes across Tennessee," said Environment and Conservation Commissioner Jim Fyke. "Tennessee's State Natural Areas reassure citizens that some of our most ecologically significant land is being protected for future generations while also available for public enjoyment now."

The week includes a full schedule of events in many of these 77 natural areas. A wide variety of interesting activities - including driving tours, cave exploration and wildflower or birding hikes - are planned to engage Tennesseans in appreciating and enjoying these special places.

"I encourage Tennessee residents to take advantage of the rich diversity found in the plants, animals and forests of our distinctive regions," Fyke said. "Some of the nation's most outstanding species and natural features are found in our State Natural Areas."

Tennessee State Natural Areas Week 2008 - Overview of Activities by Region

Events on the Cumberland Plateau will include:

- Visit Mr. And Mrs. Harry Lee Carter State Natural Area in Franklin County for a hike to Buggytop Cave and then explore the cave to experience the interesting ecology and geology of this area.
- Experience waterfalls of the Middle Plateau, as well as spring wildflowers, with a hike to Piney Falls in Rhea County.

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- Explore one of Tennessee's newest state natural areas with an off-trail "bushwhack" hike into Pogue Creek State Natural Area in Fentress County.
- Hike along a stream filled with house-sized boulders and tumbling water at North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Natural Area in Hamilton and Sequatchie Counties.
- Join a group to visit Colditz Cove State Natural Area in Fentress County to experience Northrup Falls, which plunges nearly 60 feet into a beautiful pool in a gorge filled with magnificent old-growth hemlock, white pine trees and lush rhododendron.
- Hike to the famous Twin Arches State Natural Area in Scott County for a look at the arches and nearby Cumberland Plateau sandstone rock houses, along with two rare plants in Tennessee - the Cumberland Sandwort and Lucy Braun's White Snakeroot.

Events in Middle Tennessee will include:

- Visit Stillhouse Hollow Falls and Cheek Bend State Natural Areas in Maury County for a hike featuring spring wildflowers and waterfalls.
- Take a guided waterfall tour along three State Scenic Rivers - Spring Creek, Roaring River and Blackburn Fork - in Overton and Jackson Counties.
- Take a driving tour to Morrison Meadow, Chimneys and Sequatchie Cave State Natural Areas in Marion County to explore three different physiographic provinces in a single day.
- Join a wildflower pilgrimage at Cedars of Lebanon State Park in Wilson County.
- Hike through a stand of enormous trees and bountiful wildflowers at Bon Aqua State Natural Area in Hickman County.
- Visit Taylor Hollow State Natural Area in Sumner County for a spectacular wildflower and bird hike.
- Visit Short Springs State Natural Area in Coffee County where you will see some of middle Tennessee's beautiful spring wildflowers and waterfalls.

Events in West Tennessee will include:

- Join a boardwalk hike at the William B. Clark Preserve and Ghost River Natural Areas in Fayette County to gain rare access to Cypress-Tupelo forests and wetlands habitats.
- Hike the loop trail along limestone barrens and cedar glades at Carroll Cabin Barrens Natural Area in Decatur County.

Some Tennessee State Parks also are offering activities, such as the Elsie Quarterman Cedar Glade Festival at Cedars of Lebanon State Park. More information about state park activities is available at www.tnstateparks.com. All of these exciting trips and more are being offered at natural areas throughout Tennessee as we celebrate State Natural Areas Week. For trip details and a complete schedule of events, visit www.tn.gov/environment/na/ and click on "Natural Areas Week" or call (615) 532-0431.

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